



By [IAN PATTERSON](#)

March 31, 2020

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Cuts to the arts over the past decade have made it increasingly difficult for the promoters to programme a festival of international standard. And year in year out that is what Moving On Music does.

Brilliant Corners 2020
Various Venues
[Belfast](#), N. Ireland
February 27 to March 7, 2020

Day Six

Linley Hamilton Quintet

There was a 'sold out' sign outside Black Box for the Linley Hamilton Quintet's concert. No doubt this was in part due to the star appeal of Americans [Mark Egan](#) and [Adam Nussbaum](#), who have played with a who's who of jazz greats. It probably owed just as much, however, to the persistent efforts of the local trumpeter, educator and broadcaster to build a loyal audience over the years. It takes work and commitment to attract and maintain audience, and Hamilton wasn't too wide of the mark when he said he probably knew everyone in the Black Box by name. Many younger musicians wondering where their audience is could learn from Hamilton's example.

This gig was the album launch of Hamilton's [For The Record](#), (Teddy D Records, 2020) and the musicians were clearly up

for it. Hard-bop was the lingua franca as the quintet roared out of the starting blocks with "Split" -Hamilton and O'Connor charging the atmosphere in the room with virtuoso solos of lung-busting energy. It would have been exhausting for all concerned to maintain such a tempo, but Hamilton knows how to pace a set. A brace of more mellow compositions duly followed, with the ever-lyrical Egan shining on [Johnny Taylor's](#) gorgeous ballad "Origin."

Despite a more subdued role than that of Hamilton, O'Connor and Nussbaum, keyboardist/arranger [Cian Boylan's](#) imprint was all over the music, both as conductor and sympathetic accompanist. Hamilton for his part, was freed up by the excellent rhythmic support, soloing with finesse on The Beatles' ballad "And I Love Her," and with passion on the lively "Holly's Moment" -a first set highlight.

The second set offered highlights aplenty, including a delightful interpretation of [Abdullah Ibrahim's](#) "Joan Capetown Flower," and Nussbaum's smoking blues "Sure Would Baby." The quintet was joined by singer [Dana Masters](#) on a soulful rendition of [Abbey Lincoln's](#) "Throw It Away." Since making Northern Ireland her home a decade ago, the South Carolina vocalist has been a backing singer for [Van Morrison](#), as well as [leading her own bands](#), but it is with Hamilton that she has found the deepest chemistry.

The fiery post-bop of the set-closer "Right Angle" saw fireworks from all, notably O'Connor -a brilliant, versatile saxophonist who is underemployed on the Irish jazz scene. A standing ovation for the quintet ensued, the musicians responding with the upbeat encore "Happy People," a suitably optimistic tune—laced with peppery solos—with which to crown a memorable gig.